

Six Reasons Why Assessments Matter

It's testing season in Utah's schools. The computer adaptive assessments of today have evolved beyond the "bubble" exams of your childhood. And while they may not count toward a student's grades, make no mistake. These tests matter.

1 Taking tests is a part of life. Annual checkups at the doctor, driver's license and college entrance exams — taking tests is something we do throughout our lives. Consider state testing in schools practice for the future, and a chance to learn coping skills.

2 Formative tests throughout the year help teachers see what is working — or not working — for students. Based on testing data, teachers can make adjustments in their instruction, such as taking extra time with specific topics. It helps guide daily instruction by shedding more light on such questions as: What can I do to help students more? In what direction should we go next?

3 Year-end summative assessments, such as the SAGE exam, measure whether a student is on the path to college- and career-readiness. SAGE, which is administered in grades 3-10, is a gauge of whether students are meeting state educational standards. These tests help the District direct resources to groups of students who need more support and determine if improvement strategies are working. Students' SAGE scores can influence course placement and provide parents an independent measure of their child's learning, answering the question: Is my child on target and doing well compared to his or her peers?

4 Students who perform well on SAGE today will likely do well on college entrance exams. Did you know that a student's performance on SAGE in middle school can predict how well he or she will do on the ACT college entrance exam in high school? SAGE, in other words, gives middle schoolers a glimpse at how they'll do on a high-stakes test in a low-stakes environment when they still have time to go back and re-learn foundational concepts.

5 Testing has always been integral to education. Teachers are constantly assessing their students' progress and learning — even if they're just calling upon students to furnish an answer to a math problem. When done well, testing doesn't distract from instruction, it's an integral part of instruction.

6 Testing takes up a small percentage of the school year. Kids spend a lot of time in school, and parents understandably want that time to be spent learning, and not taking tests. But how much of the school year is actually devoted to test-taking? With that question in mind, Canyons District recently performed an audit that revealed students spend between 1.2 percent to 2.7 percent of instruction time taking state and district assessments.



CANYONS
School District